

Must Be Love by drizzlyfinn

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Language: English

Characters: Dustin Henderson, Eleven | Jane Hopper, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Karen Wheeler, Lucas Sinclair, Martin Brenner, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Original Female Character(s), Sara Hopper, Steve Harrington, Ted Wheeler, Will Byers

Relationships: Eleven | Jane Hopper/Mike Wheeler, Jonathan Byers/Nancy Wheeler, Maxine "Max" Mayfield/Lucas Sinclair

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2018-10-11

Updated: 2018-10-11

Packaged: 2022-04-23 02:48:33

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences

Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

Chapters: 1

Words: 3,417

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

El Hopper and Mike Wheeler have always been best friends.

She couldn't help her feelings for him.

But when El's cousin from overseas comes to visit for the whole summer, where does that leave them?

Must Be Love

Author's Note:

IM SO EXCITED FOR THIS AHHH !

CHECK ME OUT ON TUMBLR: DRIZZY-FINN

OR ON WATTPAD: EMOFINN

Life is crazy.

It's filled with joyful noise, spirited dances, loud music, everything.

But, there are these moments when everything slows down. Moments where the world just disappears. The music fades into the background, and everything around you just *stops*.

There's this moment my dad likes to tell me about. It was the basketball championships. They were tied 62-62. There were only fifteen seconds left on the clock. He said to me, "You'll know you're in love when the world slows down. You look at them and you see only them. You don't hear the songs of the children nearby. You don't feel the ground underneath your feet anymore. You feel, hear, see only them." He says it's how he first knew that my mom was the one for him. She was sitting on her "Miss Indiana" throne on the float. He couldn't stop staring at her. It's when he knew that she was the one he was going to marry. Time stopped and everything disappeared.

They lost the championships that year. But, my dad said it didn't matter because he got my mom and that was the greatest prize he could ever win.

My dad also said the same slow-mo moment happened when he first saw me. He told me that when he first held me he knew he loved me. Amazing things always happened to my dad when everything went slow-mo. I can't say the same thing. I get nervous and worried everytime I see something in slow-mo.

"Sweetie, you stay here, alright?" My mom held my shoulders and looked into my eyes. Her cheeks were stained with tears. I looked at her confused.

I reached up my hand to wipe the tears off my cheek. "Are you okay, mommy? Why are you crying? Tell me, mommy. Maybe I can make it better."

She smiled sweetly at me, "El, honey, just stay here. I'm going to go buy something at the market. I'll be back." She kissed the top of my head and started to walk off.

"Mommy?" I started to walk behind her. "Mommy!" I tried to reach out and grab her.

She started to run. "Mommy! Where are you going? Mommy!" I felt the tears pour out of my eyes.

I stood in the middle of the street, staring, as the woman running away became smaller and smaller and smaller.

That was the first time I ever saw someone in slow-mo. The last time I saw my mother. Sometimes I look back to that day and think that I should've ran faster. Maybe I could have caught her. But, I was only 6 and I know I never could've reached her.

That was eleven years ago. It's all in the past.

Though, I never could have survived the past eleven years if it wasn't for my best friend, Mike Wheeler.

The basketball rolled towards me and bumped my foot. I picked it up and looked at it until a boy, probably the same age as me, came up.

"Sorry!" He said.

I chuckled and smiled as I gave the ball to him, showing off the recent gaps in my teeth. "It's okay."

"Ew, she's so ugly! She doesn't even have all her teeth!" The boys behind him said. They were all pointing and laughing at me. I covered my mouth with my hands, embarrassed that I had so many missing teeth.

The boy with the basketball turned towards them and screamed, "AHHH!" The boys ran away scared and screaming.

"Like what I did?" He smiled, also showing off the few gaps he had in his teeth.

Still embarrassed, I left my hands over my mouth. I nodded as a, "Thank you."

"They're gone! You can smile now!" He put the basketball between his legs, "Here, like this." He pinched both his cheeks and pulled upward, creating a huge smile.

I took away my hands from my face and started to laugh so hard that I fell down. I copied what he did to his face and we both started laughing hard again.

I may have lost my mother but I found a best friend.

Time moves faster when your happy.

At least, that's what I found with Mike.

"Your clothes stink, Mike! They smell like actual shit!" I said as I next to him. We were walking back from the basketball game to his house. Just a small 2-on-2 match. We won of course.

"My clothes smell like shit?!" He grabbed me by my shirt and smelled it, "You smell like horse crap! You need to invest in some new deodorant because whatever you're using isn't working out." I pushed him towards the side.

We didn't notice it at first, too distracted by each other, but as we were nearing his house we noticed it.

"Please, Ted, talk to me! Tell me what's wrong! We can fix this-us! It's not too late. Please, Ted, stay! What about the kids?" Karen, Mike's mom, was yelling. Ted, his dad, was carrying a bunch of suitcases to his car.

Without saying another word, Ted Wheeler drove away from his family.

I looked over to Karen, her eyes were glassy and her hands were shaking. She clasped her hands together, massaging her hands to try and calm her anxiety. She looked in the direction her husband drove off in. Maybe she's hoping he'll come back and hold her again, making her feel complete and put together.

But, It didn't happen.

I looked up towards Mike. And that's when it happened. My second slow-mo. Tears were flowing down his face, but he made no sound. He was staring at his mother, then the ground. He turned towards me and I pulled him in for a hug. I felt his arms wrap around me tightly, as if he would break into pieces if he didn't.

In all honesty, I wasn't surprised that Ted Wheeler left. He was never a good dad. He never listened to his kids; he didn't even listen to his wife. He put food on the table and clothes on their back so Mike always felt guilty whenever he thought that his dad wasn't doing good enough. Ted provided for his family. But he didn't show up when it was needed.

I pulled away from Mike. He kept staring at the ground. "Mike," I lifted up his chin so he'd be looking at me. I pinched both my cheeks and pulled them to create a big smile, like he had done for me 8 years ago. He gave a sad, uninterested laugh. He began to turn to walk inside. I pulled him back by his arm, "Mike, come on."

He looked at me with a displeasing look but I used puppy eyes in return. Eventually, he gave up and pinched his cheeks and pulled just like I did. I smiled and let him go as we walked back inside the house.

2 years later, age 17, and we were back at the same spot we are everyday.

The basketball court.

We were playing a 2-on-2 against our friends. We were tied and whoever mad the next point wins. Mike was trying to steal the ball when it suddenly happened.

Time slowed down, the music faded, the chatter behind me went silent. I saw Mike running across the court in slow-mo, going for the ball. I only saw him, the boy who has been my best friend all these years. I stood in shock, staring at him. This can't be good. Everytime I see something in slow-mo, something bad happens.

But this time something felt different. It didn't feel...bad. It felt like I was floating on a cloud.

"El!" I heard Mike calling me and I saw Mike calling me but I couldn't seem to make my body move. I was completely frozen. "El!" I heard him call again. Next thing I knew, the ball hit me in the face and I was staring at the sky.

"El!" I heard Mike yell. He ran to me and kneeled down. His face was only a foot away from mine. "El, are you okay?" He asked, worried and confused.

I love you, Mike Wheeler.

"What?" Mike asked.

"What did she say?" One of the boys, I think Will, said.

"I think she said, 'I love you.'" Max, my best friend, said. They all started laughing.

Mike cleared the hair out my face, still looking very confused. I was still smiling, "I love you, Mike."

That was the moment I wish I could fast foward and forget everything that just happened. It felt like a bad dream. Except, it was real life.

*I woke up, scaring myself awake. I realized I was dreaming about *that* moment again. I stuffed a pillow against my face, "Goddammit, El! What's wrong with you? He's your best friend!" I got up and started pacing around my room. I grabbed the small basketball that was near my bed. I threw it to the floor, "Stupid! Crazy! Ugh!" I shot the ball towards the hoop and missed. I grabbed it again, "It'll never happen, El! Never going to happen!"*

At the last word my dad opened the door, confused look on his face.
"Dad, partner! What's up?"

My dad and I have always called each other partner since I can remember. That's how we see each other. He's not a dad who's going to act like a strict guy just because he's a dad. We're partners and we help each other through everything. He's my second best friend, my first one being Mike.

"Partner, come on! If we don't leave soon we're going to be late!" He closed the door.

I ran to my bathroom and quickly brushed my teeth. I took a shower as fast as I could and went back to my room to get dressed. I put on a tank top and basketball shorts before running to the mirror to tie my hair. I put it in a low, messy bun and put on my cap backwards. I ran out to the car and into the passenger's seat. My dad was already waiting there for me and started driving as soon as I got in.

We were on our way to the restaurant. It belongs to our whole family, but my dad is the one who runs it. I usually go during all the free time I have to help out. When we got to the restaurant, two ladies were waiting outside.

"What can I help you with?" My dad asked them as he shut the door to the car.

"There's this hair and makeup competition and we were wondering-" They started.

"I already told someone there, no. I'm not going to cater it." My dad said.

"But think about the publicity you'll be getting! Many people would be eating your food! It's a great way to advertise!" The other lady said.

"You guys make the best food in the area!"

"I'm not interested in catering to those stupid contests."

My dad's friend Benny came in and tried to talk to my dad, "Jim,

that's a really big contest. Are you sure?"

"I said no. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to get to work." He walked away and I looked at Benny, wondering if he also noticed the anger in my dad's voice. I shrugged and we walked into the restaurant together.

"Hi, Auntie Tess!" I heard my cousin say from one of the tables in the back.

Auntie Tess is our Aunt who lives in London. Her daughter, my cousin Sara, is eighteen and we haven't seen each other in a few years. We only talk to each other through Facetime now. But, in a few hours, she should be here in Hawkins. She said that she has to visit some schools here in America and she asked if she could stay with us for the summer while she visits a few of them. We were happy to let her stay with us, especially since we all haven't seen her in so long.

I walk over to my cousin, Jessica, and look at the screen.

"Hi, El! You look so grown up now!" Auntie Tess says through the screen.

"Hi, Auntie Tess! Thank you! Do you, uh, know what time Sara will be here?"

"She got on her plane last night so she should be there in two to three hours."

"Oh, okay. Thank you, Auntie Tess! I miss you!"

"I miss you too, darling!" I waved goodbye to her and walked to the kitchen to go help out. I was so excited to see Sara again that I could barely focus on anything.

"What kind of hairstyle do you want?" Karen asked the girl in the chair.

"I want one that will make me look drop dead gorgeous." She said through her tears.

"Wow! Who do you want to show off to?" Karen joked. By the girl's face, it was obvious she was very serious and shouldn't be messed with right now. Karen cleared her throat, "Now, don't cry. I'll give you the most beautiful hairstyle I can do. But, tell me, which boy made you cry?" Karen crossed her arms.

"Your son!" She said.

Sitting in the back of the salon with a magazine, was Max Mayfield, best friend of El Hopper. She switched to a seat closer to the crying girl and Karen. She put up her magazine and listened to what the girl had to say about Mike.

"Mike said he doesn't want to date me. He got my hopes up just to watch them all fall down!" She started crying even more. Max was smiling wide behind her magazine, excited to tell El about it.

"You know what? I'll give you a free haircut! Jo!" Karen called to the girl behind the desk, "Give her a massage while I get my stuff from the back. Make sure she's comfortable and happy!" Karen disappeared into the back. Max ran out of the salon and went in the direction of El's family's restaurant.

I was just cutting up vegetables when all of a sudden Max bursts through the doors. She was out of breath, as if she ran all the way over here.

"El," She was panting very hard, "important news." She raised up her finger to single to give her a second. She took a deep breath. "Mike and Jen broke up. If you can even call it a break up, I didn't even know they were officially dating."

My heart skipped a beat when she mentioned Mike. I turned back to the vegetables I was cutting to hide the redness in my face. "And? What does that have to do with me?"

Even though El didn't see her, Max gave her the 'Are you dumb?' look. "C'mon El. We both know about your feelings for him. No need to hide how you're really feeling about all this. You love him!"

I covered Max's mouth before she could say anymore. "Hey! What's this talk about love?" My cousin, Andrew, asked from behind me. "Uncle, El's talking about love! She loves someone!" I made a bunch of gestures to tell them to stop but they ignored it all.

"I don't!" I yelled out.

"No, no, no, you guys got it all wrong! I said I love my...new haircut! And...the steam and everything is going to ruin it so I better get going! Uh, El! You have to come with me!" Max ran out the restaurant, dragging me behind her. I pulled her to the direction of the bathroom instead so I could wash my hands first.

"How many times do I have to tell you that I don't love him? I hit my head really hard and accidentally said it, I don't even know why it was 'I love you' and not something else." I told Max.

"How many times do I have to tell you? I don't love you. The ball hit my head so hard that I started spewing out nonsense!" I walked faster than Mike so I wouldn't have to look him in the eye.

He pulled me back by my shirt. "Are you sure it's nothing?"

Maybe that hit to the head had some lasting effects. Because I'm pretty sure I saw hope in Mike's eyes.

I sighed, "It's nothing. I didn't mean it." I pushed him away playfully and smiled, "Me? Have feelings for you? You wish! It was 5 months ago, cant we let it go now? Can we stop embarrassing me?"

Mike nodded and we resumed our walk back home.

"Whatever you say, El." Max smirked, and I rolled my eyes.

"Nothing! There's nothing between Jen and I. She's just so...boring."

Mike told his friends, Lucas, Dustin, and Will.

"You said she was *the one*. How come she isn't anymore?" Will asked Mike.

"Yeah, Mike, what happened to that?" Lucas and Dustin asked.

"We went on one date and, I swear, I was almost about to fall asleep. She's very pretty and very smart, but so plain. And also very hard to get. It just wasn't worth it."

"Go for El! She's not hard to get! She's smart, fun, and...kind of pretty!" Dustin suggested.

"Plus, you already know she loves you!" Lucas playfully hit Mike's shoulder and winked.

"Remember this?" Dustin threw the ball in his hand to Lucas. Lucas fell down and pretended to be El when she got hit in the head.

"Oh, Mike. I looovve you." Lucas and Dustin both went on top of Mike while Will watched us and laughed.

I pushed them off me, "That was back in January. It's already summer. Let that go. El and I already put that behind us. She told me that I'm not her type anyways."

"Maybe she's in denial." Will said.

"She's not in denial. We already talked about it."

"It's not embarrassing you. I just wanted to tell you that we can talk about your feelings. C'mon, let's go sit over there under the tree and talk."

"Mike! Can you stop it? Me? I could never like someone like you! Even I was surprised with what I said. It was funny, wasn't it? Even you laughed!"

"El, I only laughed because-"

"It's weird! Not normal! We're like brother and sister, right? And, no offense, but you're not really my type. All those other girls are crazy about

you. But me? No, not one of those girls. I don't even know what they see in you, if I'm totally honest." She chuckled.

"Why? What is it that you see in me?" I wanted her to say the truth. I know she's lying.

"What do I see? There!" She pointed at my legs, "I see your very long and skinny legs!"

"Hey! My legs may be long and skinny but they can still beat you in a race!"

"And your eyebags! Jesus, Mike, what are you carrying in them?"

"I'll have you know that these eyes are chick magnets. One look into them and she falls in love!"

"And the way you smell!" She smelled my shirt and gagged to prove her point. "It smells like your drenched in some old man's cologne!"

"Better to smell like a grandpa than food all day!"

"And your hair! It's so floppy and like a mop! You think the girls really go crazy for your hair?"

"Girls do go crazy for my hair! It's your hair that all wild. Try brushing it once in a while." I stuck my tongue out at her. She stuck out hers back.

-

Back at the restaurant, El had just finished telling Max the story of her talk with Mike.

"Woah, intense. You guys just traded insults. Are you sure you're not into him? Even a little?"

"Not even a little. Isn't it obvious I'm not his type?"

-

"Are you sure you're not into El? Like deadass?" Lucas, Will, and Dustin asked Mike.

"I'm not into her. Deadass." Mike replied.

"So, she's stuck in the friend zone?"

"Exactly. Friend zone. There are girls you make your girl *space* friend and girls you make your girlfriend. No space. El is the girl space friend. Which I'm happy about. I don't think El and I would work well as a couple."

"Ok. Are we good now? Friends?" El stuck out her hand to have Mike shake.

He looked down at her hand and back to her, "No. Best. Best friends. Okay?"

El smiled, "Okay."

Author's Note:

ok to make sure no one's confused:

- I will usually start the chap in El's POV
- If i add a line, that means that it will switch to Mike and will usually be in 3rd person (It will be obvi if I make it in Mike's POV)
- Hypens "-" are just to let you know that I'm going to switch back to another scene

I LOVE YOU ALL AND HAVE A GREAT DAY